

Dear Commissioners:

Stop hidden phone fees so I can truly compare prices of phone services. I support the petition filed by the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates and endorsed by other consumer advocacy organizations. CG Docket No. 04-208, Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Truth-In-Billing and Billing Format, is long overdue.

Phone bills should be truthful and easy to understand. The older we all get, a good percentage of us will lose some degree of the mental sharpness we used to have. (I speak from experience!) Such billing practices therefore exploit many of the aging population, as well as those folks with chronic illnesses which impair their concentration. (Again, I speak from experience.) In addition, these companies prey on people who may never had the ability or understand the necessity of examining each monthly bill. And what about the hundreds of thousands of folks who work hard daily, who find themselves exhausted and spent at the end of most days -- and much too tired to analyze each and every bill, much less take the additional time to investigate the errors or "mystery charges" they find. Should you, the FCC, choose to permit these unethical (if not illegal!!) practices to continue, I believe you are just as culpable as these crooked companies are for permitting their practices to continue. Now: Will you stand WITH the American People (favorite phrase of our fearless leader) or AGAINST us??

Because this practice is tolerated by the FCC, long distance and wireless phone companies are able to hide the true cost of service. These add-ons make the advertised price of service significantly less than the amount of the check I have to write each month to pay the bill. Competition will not work if consumers cannot accurately compare prices when shopping for service.

Many states are stepping up to address this problem. They should be allowed to proceed. However, the FCC shouldn't shirk its responsibility, nor limit states from doing more.

The FCC should immediately grant the NASUCA petition to investigate billing practices, and prohibit phone and wireless companies from imposing separate monthly fees, line items or surcharges unless expressly mandated by law or the charge is expressly authorized by a governmental authority.